

ASSEMBLY JOINT RESOLUTION

No. 51

STATE OF NEW JERSEY

219th LEGISLATURE

PRE-FILED FOR INTRODUCTION IN THE 2020 SESSION

Sponsored by:

Assemblywoman BRITNEE N. TIMBERLAKE

District 34 (Essex and Passaic)

SYNOPSIS

Designates April of each year as “CASA Child Advocate Month.”

CURRENT VERSION OF TEXT

Introduced Pending Technical Review by Legislative Counsel.



- 1 **A JOINT RESOLUTION** designating April of each year as “CASA
2 Child Advocate Month.”
3
- 4 **WHEREAS**, It is estimated that there are 1.9 million residents of New
5 Jersey aged 18 and under; and
6 **WHEREAS**, Among that total, over 2,800 cases of child abuse and
7 neglect were substantiated by the Division of Child Protection and
8 Permanency in 2017; and
9 **WHEREAS**, Incidents of child abuse can include physical, mental,
10 sexual, and emotional attacks, assaults, and manipulation; and
11 **WHEREAS**, Adverse childhood experiences and trauma associated with
12 child abuse can have long-lasting effects on a child’s health,
13 wellbeing, and success; and
14 **WHEREAS**, Survivors of child abuse need people in their lives that will
15 consider their best interests; and
16 **WHEREAS**, The New Jersey Department of Children and Families
17 serves in an official capacity by investigating allegations of child
18 abuse and working with families to strengthen and empower them
19 with supports and services; and
20 **WHEREAS**, Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA) are assigned
21 by family court judges to champion the needs of child abuse
22 victims; and
23 **WHEREAS**, CASAs are everyday people, with diverse backgrounds
24 and professions, who volunteer to go through very specialized
25 training to be a voice for children in the child welfare system; and
26 **WHEREAS**, CASA volunteers serve as the court’s eyes and ears in a
27 child’s life, helping to improve the quality of information presented
28 to the court and child welfare systems; and
29 **WHEREAS**, In State fiscal year 2018, CASAs provided assistance to
30 3,877 foster children in New Jersey; and
31 **WHEREAS**, April 2019 is National Child Abuse Prevention and
32 Awareness Month, an observance that reflects the purpose of
33 CASA programs; now, therefore,
34
- 35 **BE IT RESOLVED** *by the Senate and General Assembly of the*
36 *State of New Jersey:*
37
- 38 1. April of each year shall be designated as “CASA Child
39 Advocate Month” in New Jersey.
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- 41 2. The Governor is respectfully encouraged to annually issue a
42 proclamation calling upon public officials and citizens of this State
43 to observe “CASA Child Advocate Month” with activities that
44 promote public awareness of CASA volunteers’ critical role in
45 advocating for victims of child abuse and neglect.
46
- 47 3. This act shall take effect immediately.

STATEMENT

This resolution designates the month of April of each year as “CASA Child Advocate Month” in New Jersey, to coincide with National Child Abuse Prevention and Awareness Month. Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA) of New Jersey volunteers advocate for the needs and interests of abused and neglected children in family court in all 21 counties in the State. CASAs’ goal is to ensure that all children in the child welfare system have a safe and loving, permanent home. Each CASA volunteers to undergo a minimum of 30 hours of specialized training before they are assigned their first child. These highly-trained volunteers secure necessary educational and healthcare services for every child they help. CASAs also regularly visit the child, providing consistency in the often-tumultuous life of a foster child. In addition, CASAs meet with the child’s parents, other family members, social workers, school officials, and healthcare workers, and review all of the child’s case files before making recommendations to the family court on the child’s placement. In fiscal year 2018, 1,896 CASA volunteers served over 3,800 New Jersey children, and closed 1,094 of cases.